

**Idaho Fish and Game Commission
Special Meeting
August 13, 2007**

A special meeting of the Idaho Fish and Game Commission was held by telephone conference. Commission Chairman Cameron Wheeler called the meeting to order at 8:00 am. Commissioners Bob Barowsky, Wayne Wright, Gary Power, Tony McDermott and responded to the roll call. Commissioner Randy Budge joined the call at 8:15 a.m. and Alex Irby was absent.

Present in the Director's Office: Director Cal Groen, Vigil Moore, Deputy Director; Dallas Burkhalter, Deputy Attorney General; Sharon Kiefer, Intergovernmental Policy Coordinator; Mary Boyer, Executive Assistant; Jim Lau, Chief of Administration and Doug Schleis, *Wild Idaho News*.

Director Groen stated the purpose for the meeting is to set waterfowl regulations for the 2007-2008 season, a report on Sage grouse, Senate Bill 1011 Motor Vehicle Hunting Permit, and the FY09 Budget.

Director Groen noted that prior Commission meeting notes will be sent to the Commission for their review and will be approved by telephone conference call in the near future.

RULES

Tom Hemker, Wildlife Program Coordinator, presented the Department recommendations to the Commission (Appendix 40, Exhibit 72).

Mr. Hemker reported that most of the waterfowl harvested in Idaho are produced in Canada. Waterfowl nesting conditions in these breeding areas are good in 2006. The pond index increased 13% from 4.45 million in 2006 to 5.04 million in 2007. The number of mallards in these areas in 2007 was similar to 2006 at 8.03 million birds. Southern Alberta is especially important for breeding waterfowl that come to Idaho during the hunting season. Breeding mallards in southern Alberta were similar to 2006 at 830,000 while southern Alberta ponds are up 23% at 1.23 million.

Idaho's waterfowl season is set within a framework established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on August 2, 2007 after meeting with all state fish and wildlife agencies. The 2007-08 frameworks for Idaho are 107 days for both ducks and geese between September 22, 2007 and January 24, 2008.

A statewide press release and radio spot were issued on these proposed seasons. Each region held an open house. Idaho Ducks Unlimited and the Idaho Waterfowl Association

were sent these season proposals by e-mail and they forwarded them to their membership. A notice asking for input was posted on the Department's web site.

A process called Adaptive Harvest Management (AHM) determines the general duck season framework. This process was adopted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1996 and is used to annually evaluate duck habitat and populations and select the optimal season framework for US duck seasons. Special harvest strategies are used for some of the less common ducks. Goose seasons are determined by flyway management plans for each goose population. Spring goose pair counts are the key parameter for selecting Canada goose seasons. Data collected in 2007 show that breeding habitat conditions and populations are at levels that can support a 107-day season for all waterfowl. The maximum hunting days and bags allowed by framework can be taken with no long-term impacts on Idaho's waterfowl resource. Opening the season one week earlier in northern and eastern Idaho allows more hunting opportunity in the generally higher and colder climates of northern and eastern Idaho.

Staff Recommendations:

The Department's recommendation is to take the maximum allowed hunt days and bags allowed by federal framework with two zones. This proposed season length is identical to last year. The proposed duck and goose bags would be unchanged except that the canvasback bag would increase from 1 to 2. The goose zones would change slightly to better align duck and goose zone boundaries in the Magic Valley Region.

- **Youth Hunt (Statewide)**
 - September 29-30
 - Licensed youth aged 15 and under
- **Northern and Eastern Idaho Zone**
 - Panhandle, Clearwater, Southeast, Upper Snake, and Salmon regions.
 - Geese and ducks October 6 to January 18.
 - Coots and snipe: October 6 to January 18.
- **Southwestern Zone**
 - Southwest and Magic Valley regions
 - Geese, ducks October 13 to January 25.
 - Coots and snipe: October 13 to January 25.

07-81 Commissioner Barowsky moved and Commissioner McDermott seconded a motion TO ACCEPT THE DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WATERFOWL 2007-2008 SEASONS. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

Sage Grouse Update

Mr. Hemker provided a brief update to the Commission. He noted that the Department is continuing to monitor sage grouse statewide relative to West Nile Virus (WNV). Last

year WNV was a major issue in the Southwest part of the State. In 2007 there have not been any recorded sage-grouse mortality events anywhere in the state. August is the peak of WNV and the Department will continue to monitor.

Mr. Hemker referenced the wildfires and the effects it may have on sage grouse. The Department recommendation is to monitor the situation until September 1st. The Director has authority to make changes to season lengths or bag limits if needed due to fires.

Commission direction was to monitor each region on a case by case basis and the Director will use his authority to make changes to season lengths or bag limits for sage grouse if needed due to the fires.

LEGISLATION

Motor Vehicle Hunting Permit

Sharon Kiefer presented the Department recommendation regarding motor vehicle hunting permit (Appendix 40, Exhibit 73).

Senate Bill 1011, which passed during the 2007 legislative session, became law on July 1, 2007. This bill made the disability requirements for a motor vehicle hunting permit consistent with the disability requirements for a reduced fee disability license by amending 36-1101(b) 1.

Revision of IDAPA 13.01.04.010 and 13.01.04.303 is necessary to bring consistency between statute and rule. As part of the revision, the term “handicapped” is being replaced with “disabled” or “disability” as appropriate.

Commission has the authority to revise IDAPA 13.

Staff Recommendation is to adopt proposed rules to be consistent with current statute.

07-82 Commissioner Wright moved and Commissioner Power seconded motion TO ACCEPT THE STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SENATE BILL 1011. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

FISCAL

FY09 Budget Overview

Jim Lau, Chief of Administration, provided a report to the Commission on the Department’s FY09 Budget. Mr. Lau noted that the Department is still in the process for final numbers for the FY09 budget. Mr. Lau noted that the Department will not pursue a general fee increase for FY09, and the budget will be similar to FY08. Following

Division of Financial Management guidelines for 1% increase in wages and health care costs of \$ 2,000 per employee, the overall impact will be a 4% increase over FY08.

The FY09 Budget will be submitted to Division of Financial Management and Legislative Services Office on September 4th.

MISCELLANEOUS

Information Updates

Director Groen stated that Rusty Tews, Magic Valley, has been appointed to the Fish and Game Advisory Committee. He noted that the Fish and Game Advisory Committee will be given a new charge for grizzly bear and wolf depredation at their August 27th meeting in McCall.

Director Groen referenced his participation in coordinating the 4 State Governor's Rangeland Fire Coordination Group. Director Groen has been assigned by Governor Otter to coordinate this effort.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 a.m.

Cameron Wheeler
Chairman

Cal Groen
Secretary